New and Peculiar Military Cruelties

A Thoughtful Review of the Subject from the Carthaginian Man-Crushing Elep German Poisonous Gases and Monster Shells That Drive Soldiers Deaf, Du and Insane, Deprive Them of Taste and Turn Their Bodies Black, Green and

IN executing their sudden and surprising advance against the allied lines near Ypres toward the end of April, the Germans made terribly effective use of poisonous gases, with which they suffocated and killed British and French soldiers or drove them insane before they knew that any danger was threatening them. Bodies were turned black, green and yellow.

This use of poisonous gases will doubtless go on record as the most striking and distinguishing novelty of the present war, just as every great war of the past has been marked by some peculiarly atrocious and surprising method of destroying life.

The first savage who used a knotted club to smash his opponent's skull gained a great advantage over the other who relied only on his teeth and nails. The later savage who devised a weapon he could throw took an immense step farther. Still another stage in life-destroying was marked when man devised a trap into which his enemy could fall unawares and impale himself on a sharp spike without danger to the designer of the trap. Thus he employed ruse and treachery, or, shall we say, the higher processes of reasoning?

History has been punctuated by such advances in man killing and cruelty.

Hamilcar, the Carthaginian general, used an astonishing and novel man-killing device when he employed armed elephants against people who had never met any animals stronger than horses. The Carthaginians were an astonishing people, who, with only a city of their own, established a world empire by hiring other people to fight for them.

Some of the Carthaginian generals were among the ablest soldiers that ever lived. Carthage had imported a huge population of fierce Northern European barbarians—Celts, Goths and others—to serve them as soldiers. The barbarians rebelled, thinking that the rich city of Carthage, with its small force of native soldiers, would be easy to plunder.

The barbarian hordes advanced from their settlements, shouting hoarse cries, eager for plunder and rapine. Suddenly Hamilcar's trained elephants appeared among them. The barbarians had never seen an elephant before, and the mere sight appalled them.

The elephants were armed. They had spikes on their tusks, and their chests and sides were protected with armor. They had been trained to stab men with the spikes and crush them under their feet. Their naturally formidable methods of fighting had been intensified by training.

The spears and swords of the barbarians were of little effect upon the elephants. The hordes of human beings were trodden down and crushed. Many of them fled in terror at the sight of the strange new enemy and threw their companions into confusion. The rout of the rebels was complete and the slaughter terrible.

Hamilcar's still more celebrated son, Hannibal, employed elephants when he nearly completed the conquest of the Roman Empire. According to tradition, he would have succeeded had he not stopped too long to enjoy the delights of Capua. The elephants were useful in this case, but the brave and intelligent Romans found ways of checking them, just as the allies have begun to do in the case of the poisonous gases used by the Germans.

The ancient Assyrians, who were a very intelligent and ingenious people, used some horribly cruel methods of dealing with their enemies and extending their dominion over the civilized world. Many of these methods are illustrated by the wonderful carvings found at Nineveh, Babylon and other sites in Mesopotamia.

King Assurbanipal, otherwise known as Sardanapalus, was remarkable for his cruelties and his ingenuity. When he besieged Pelusium, on the frontier of Egypt, he caused his soldiers to hurl cats into the city. As the cats were peculiarly sacred to the ancient Egyptians, the unfortunate people, instead of fighting, had to attend to the injuries of the animals.

After Assurbanipal had taken a number of prisoners he would order a vast floor of bricks to be constructed and have the bricks heated to an unbearable point. Then he would have the poor prisoners driven on to the hot bricks, and while they danced up and down in horrible agony he would fan himself and enjoy their sufferings.

This had the effect of discouraging war in the rest of the population, and Assurbanipal regarded it as a justifiable military measure. There was, of course, no Convention of The Hague at that time.

Another practice which Assurbanipal enjoyed was that of flaying his prisoners alive.

The wooden horse, by means of which the Greeks captured Troy, is one of the earliest and most celebrated ruses of war. It cannot be called atrocious, but as a piece of trickery it is hardly equalled in ancient history. The Greeks, having besieged Troy in vain for ten years, constructed a huge horse, which they filled with armed men. This was sent to Troy as an appropriate offering to the goddess Minerva, who was worshipped in the city and was received with great respect by the inhabitants. In the night the Greeks came out of the horse and opened the city gates to their companions, who captured the city.

Perhaps of all the measures adopted in war the most tragic and the most dramatic was that employed by the English during the mutiny in India in 1857. The English took the ringleaders of the native soldiers who had mutinied and murdered English civilians and women, tied them to the mouths of cannon and blew them to shreds. The reason of this strange punishment was that ordinary death would have been no deterrent to the Hindus, as they believe in reincarnation in a higher form. Therefore their bodies were blown to pieces, which made reincarnation impossible, according to Hindu belief.

The history of India is full of horrors. In the early days of British activities in India Surajah-Dowlah, the terrible Nabob of Bengal, captured Calcutta, the principal English settlement. He took the 146 men comprising the English garrison and imprisoned them in a room eighteen feet square. In the morning only twenty-three were alive out of the 146, the remainder having died from lack of air, thirst and pressure. This room is the famous "Black Hole of Calcutta."

One of Verestchagin's celebrated picture of war shows how Napoleon caused captured Russian peasants to be lined up in a church during his invasion of Russia in 1812 and shot. The peasants had fired on the French soldiers and hindered the invasion in other ways. He executed them in church to make the spectacle more impressive.

A startling and terrifying innovation in early warfare was the use of 'Greek fire." It was first used by the Greeks of the Byzantine Empire to repel the attacks of the Saracen hordes on Constantinople or Byzantium in 673 A. D. The Saracens were in overwhelming numbers, and the Byzantines were a highly civilized and rather effeminate people.

Suddenly a mysterious and to the Saracens magical substance was thrown on their ships and burnt up vessels and men. This was "Greek Fire." All the Saracen ships and 30,000 of their troops were destroyed. Constantinople was saved from the Asiatics for centuries to come.

"Greek Fire" was composed of bitumen, sulphur, naphtha and nitre. It was something like gunpowder, but without its explosive or propulsive force. Placed in bombs or simply laid in a train along the earth, it had considerable value in destroying the enemy's men and fortifications.

"Greek Fire" saved Byzantium from the Asiatics and barbarians on many occasions. Its manufacture was kept a secret in the Byzantine Empire for several centuries, but the secret gradually became known, and it was used in European countries down to the invention of gunpowder in the fourteenth century.

The introduction of gunpowder marked a startling progress in the art of killing men, which is equalled by no other single step forward. The first great battle in which gunpowder was used is said to have been Crecy fought in 1346, when King Edward III. of England defeated the French. Edward, with an army of 30,000 men, is credited with killing 30,000 Frenchmen out of an army of 80,000. The gunpowder not only killed many French, but, by creating terror, threw others into disorder. Edward had used gunpowder before this in his campaign against the Scotch.

The Turks used to impale their captured enemies on long sharp stakes set upright in the ground. The spectacle of their prisoners suffering and dying in this horrible manner gave great satisfaction to the Turks.

The Moors of Morocco chop off the heads of their captured enemies and stick them on gateways, walls and other prominent places.

Admiral Blake, the great English seventeenth century admiral, introduced the practise of firing red hot cannon balls, which had the effect of setting fire to the wooden ships in which they lodged. Modern shells would ignite a wooden ship without preliminary heating, but the cannon balls of those days did not exert anything like the same friction.

Archimedes, the celebrated Greek philosopher and inventor of the "water screw," was a pioneer in destructive warfare. He is said to have destroyed the Roman fleet of Marcellus, which was besieging Syracuse in 217 A. D., by turning the sun rays on it by means of concentric mirrors.

The war of 1864, in which Prussia and Austria crushed Denmark, is sometimes called "the needle-gun war," because it was the first important conflict in which this improved type of rifle was used.

The reader can now consider all these steps in the art of war and decide how they compare with the present use of poisonous gases by the Germans.

The poisonous gases came as a complete surprise to the allies and enabled the Germans to make a considerable advance in the vicinity of Ypres on the way to the English Channel. The first experience with the poisonous gases is thus described in the British official report:

"The first intimation that all was not well was conveyed to our troops who were holding the left wing of the British line by the withdrawal of some French colonials and the appearance of a wall of vapor. Our flank being
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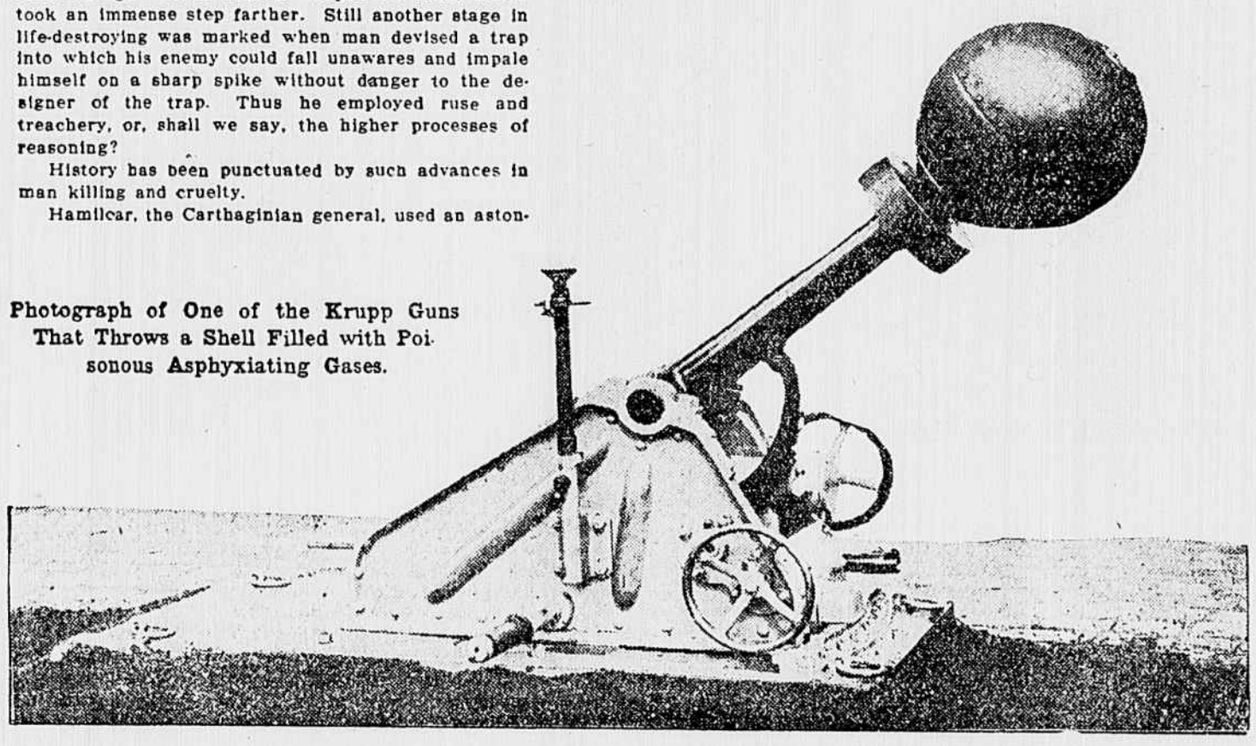

Photograph of One of the Krupp Guns That Throws a Shell Filled with Poisonous Asphyxiating Gases.

German Krupp Shells with Poisonous Gases Falling Among the Allies. Reconstructed from the Photograph of the Gun and a Cabled Account.

How Hamilcar Surprised and Trampled Under Foot the

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